

SANCTUARY WATCH

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Sanctuary Watch is a publication of the Department of Commerce, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) National Marine Sanctuary Program, Communications Branch.

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Cover: A kayaker paddles around Anacapa Island inside Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary.
Photo: Laura Francis

Letter from the Director



This issue of *Sanctuary Watch* highlights many of the exciting recreational opportunities available in national marine sanctuaries—from fishing and diving to wildlife watching and kayaking...and more!

Did you know that national marine sanctuaries are established, in part, for their recreational or aesthetic qualities? In fact, recreation enthusiasts have played a major role in establishing sanctuaries and protecting these special places.

You may not be aware, for example, that divers were at the forefront in helping to establish Flower Garden Banks and other sanctuaries. Through programs like Reef Environmental Education Foundation's Great Annual Fish Count (see page 5), divers continue to help resource managers learn about what exactly is going on underneath that endless blue horizon.

Anglers, too, have been active in conserving and protecting America's natural resources. In our new guest column, "Sanctuary Voices" (see back page), you will hear directly from Michael Nussman, president and CEO of the American Sportfishing Association, who offers his viewpoint on ways to enhance the working relationship between sanctuaries and anglers. You will hear in future issues from others who also have a profound connection to our national marine sanctuaries—America's ocean and Great Lakes treasures.

The challenge we all face is how best to protect our nation's marine resources and manage sanctuaries while allowing compatible recreational and commercial activities. We take pride in our philosophy of working closely with local community leaders and the public in meeting that challenge. We may not always agree on which management approach is best, but we all agree that maintaining the health and vitality of our oceans is in everyone's best interest.

Please read on about the many ways you can experience and enjoy *your* national marine sanctuaries!

Sincerely,

Daniel J. Basta, Director
National Marine Sanctuary Program

Above: The beautiful kelp forests of Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary are popular with divers.
Photo: Kip Evans

Right: Sanctuaries offer excellent recreational opportunities.
Photo: Merit McCrea



Sanctuaries

Something for Everyone

Chances are, if you love the ocean, you'll find something to do in a national marine sanctuary. While most sanctuary visitors simply enjoy a day at the beach, many more fish, take pictures, boat, view wildlife, dive, kayak or surf. For example, more than three million people visit the Florida Keys each year to dive, fish, boat or just relax. Thousands scan the horizon each year in search of whales or seabirds in Massachusetts, California and Hawaii. Recreational fishermen ply the waters of all national marine sanctuaries. Wilderness lovers enjoy the remote and beautiful shoreline of Washington's Olympic Coast. Divers travel from around the world to enjoy the underwater beauty of Monterey Bay or the Gulf of Mexico's Flower Garden Banks. And the list goes on. What's your favorite activity?

Contact the national marine sanctuary nearest you (see map below) to learn more about the recreational opportunities available to you and your family. For more information, visit sanctuaries.noaa.gov.



Paddling Through Paradise

One Kayaker's Journey

Kayaking in national marine sanctuaries offers an intimate experience with the marine environment and provides insight as to what makes these places so special. Sanctuaries that offer excellent kayaking or other paddling opportunities include Channel Islands, Florida Keys, Gulf of the Farallones, Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale, Monterey Bay, Olympic Coast and Thunder Bay. Here is one kayaker's experience in the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary:

A tangle of mangrove trunks, branches and roots obstructed my path as I searched for the small channel the kayaking outfitter said would lead me deep into one of the last pristine mangrove forests in the United States.

"It's not really obvious and there will be spots that get pretty tight for a kayak, but it's well worth it," I recall the outfitter telling me. Of course, this is part of the fun when kayaking in the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary, where there are endless channels and islands to explore.

All of a sudden, there it was—a small opening no wider than our kayaks. We glided into the dimly lit world underneath the canopy. I looked down into the crystal clear water to see mangrove snappers darting about and colorful sea stars attached to the maze of roots. I felt like an 8-year-old kid on Disney's "Pirates of the Caribbean" ride, entering a whole other world.

(Cont'd. on pg. 4)

Kayaking is a great way to explore sanctuaries. Photo: © Andra Lankford



89 million people participate in some form of marine recreation each year.

Star of the Sea



Photo: Courtesy of Judy Wright

Judy Wright says she was “terrified” the first time she went diving.

Now she is the owner of the wildly popular Island Dive Center on St. Simons Island, Ga., and is serving her fourth year as the recreational diving representative on the sanctuary advisory council for Gray’s Reef National Marine Sanctuary.

From scared first-time diver to dive instructor, Judy has seen many changes in her own life. And she says she has seen changes in the environmental ethics of the diving community. Changes she likes and can take credit for bringing about.

Each year, she certifies about 75 new divers including some youngsters from a summer scuba camp. And each of those divers learns as much about protecting the marine environment as they do about diver safety. Judy emphasizes a “take pictures, not pieces” philosophy when diving and teaching scuba. But it wasn’t always that way.

As a new diver, she once trapped a baby black sea bass in a restaurant-sized mayonnaise jar to take back for a friend’s home saltwater aquarium. “I did it because I knew how to,” says Judy. “Now, I wouldn’t dream of doing such a thing and neither would

most divers. We all know better.”

She tells the story on herself to illustrate how aware the diving community has become of the need to protect the resource they use for recreation.

“If every diver takes a souvenir, there will not be anything left for the divers of the future.”

In 1996, Judy started Georgia’s first organized Reef Sweep when she and a team of volunteer divers helped rid Gray’s Reef of trash. Her efforts against marine debris and for diver environmental education won her a National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Environmental Hero award. Gray’s Reef continues the Reef Sweep program—this year two separate recreational diving clubs conducted clean ups at Gray’s Reef picking up everything from cans and fishing line to matchbook covers.

Recreational divers particularly enjoy diving in marine sanctuaries and other protected areas, Judy says, for a very simple reason: “That’s where the marine life is, that’s where you see the fish.”

A passionate advocate for diving in Georgia waters, Judy dove Gray’s Reef before it became a sanctuary in 1981. The sanctuary designation really made a difference to her business, however, because more people are aware that sanctuaries are homes to the nation’s ocean treasures.

“If I tell people we are going diving at the Sapelo live bottom [the old local name for the area that is now Gray’s Reef sanctuary] they don’t get too excited. But when I tell them we are going to a national marine sanctuary, they really get excited,” she says. “If it’s a sanctuary, it’s special.”



Sanctuaries are for the Birds and the People Who Love Them

How long is your commute to work? Twenty-five, 50, 100 miles? What if your commute was 2,000 miles each way? This may seem impossible but for the black-footed albatross, it’s just a normal day on the job. As remarkable as it may seem, these long distance commuting champions sometimes travel almost 4,000 miles round-trip from their nesting sites in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands to the rich feeding grounds all along the West Coast.

Located 50 miles northwest of San Francisco, Cordell Bank is the destination for a tremendous diversity of seabirds, including species that don’t typically come near shore. This in turn makes Cordell Bank a destination for bird watchers, or “birders,” looking to add species to their lists.

“Of 14 albatross species worldwide, five species have been documented at Cordell Bank,” says Rick Stallcup, a well-known California seabird expert. “Cordell Bank is without question the albatross capital of the Northern Hemisphere.”

Not many birders brave the North Pacific’s weather and make the trip offshore to Cordell Bank but birders have many other opportunities to view rare seabirds at one of 13 national marine sanctuaries found along America’s coasts.

For example, birders Russ Wigh and Robert Calhoun conducted the first formal bird survey

(Cont’d. on pg. 4)



Long-tailed Jaeger.
Photo: Rich Stallcup



Northern Fulmar. Photo: Rich Stallcup

Paddling Through Paradise (Cont'd. from pg. 2)

Except this world was real and every stroke of my paddle illuminated a new discovery.

Because kayaks are quiet and offer a low profile on the water, they are an excellent way to observe marine wildlife in their natural setting. Paddlers still need to take care to not approach resting marine mammals, nesting sea birds or other wildlife too closely. Please consult with your local sanctuary office for advice on what seasons and locations are best for kayaking and any special precautions needed to protect marine wildlife. Go grab a kayak, paddle and life jacket and have fun!



Kayaking the Estero de San Antonio is a rare opportunity for accessing one of the most remote reaches of Gulf of the Farallones National Marine Sanctuary. Photo: Maria Brown

Sanctuaries are for the Birds (Cont'd. from pg. 3)

this past summer in Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary, located 17 miles off the Georgia coast, and were amazed at the diversity of pelagic seabirds usually found much farther offshore. (See article "Sanctuary Wings" in the fall 2003 issue of *Sanctuary Watch* for more information on this trip.)

Birders can expect to add the red-footed booby (Florida Keys), Forster's tern (Monterey Bay) and tufted puffin (Olympic Coast) by visiting one of these sanctuaries.

So, before planning your next birding trip, don't forget that national marine sanctuaries are hidden gems for birding enthusiasts. Your local sanctuary office can provide information on birding opportunities and best locations for viewing where the birds will not be disturbed.



FACTOID: Bird-watching is one of the most popular marine recreation activities in the United States. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service estimates that 18.5 million people go birding along our coasts each year.

Wildlife watchers at Cordell Bank. Photo: Jennifer Stock



Newsplash

Time to Count Humpback Whales in Hawaii—Feel like heading south for the winter? That's what a few thousand North Pacific humpback whales do each year when they embark on a migration from Alaska to the warm, protected waters of Hawaii. However, this is no vacation for the whales. They do not eat during their several months in Hawaii, but instead focus on breeding and calving their young. To keep track of how many whales visit each year, Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary sponsors a public sanctuary-wide count on the last Saturday of January, February and March and we need your help. For more information, please visit hawaiihumpbackwhale.noaa.gov.

Gray's Reef Draft Management Plan Released—On October 24, 2003, Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary released a draft management plan and draft environmental impact statement for public comment. The draft plan is part of a comprehensive public review process that is examining current sanctuary management, research and education programs. The draft plan is the culmination of more than four years of study, planning and extensive public comment. For more information, please visit graysreef.noaa.gov.

Remembering Those Lost on the Ill-fated Steamship *Portland*—On a cold, stormy November night in 1898, all 192 passengers and crew of the steamship *Portland* perished in one of the worst storms in New England history. The impact of this tragedy on New England communities was the subject of a two-day symposium November 7-8 sponsored by Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary and Portland Harbor Museum in Portland, Maine. For more information, please visit stellwagen.noaa.gov.

Scientists Explore a Piece of World War II History—Barely two weeks after the attack on Pearl Harbor, World War II hostilities broke out just off the California coast when the tanker *Montebello* fell victim to a torpedo fired from the Japanese submarine I-21. All 38 men aboard the *Montebello* survived and were rescued. Sixty-two years later, former *Montebello* crewmember Richard Quincy, 84, was a special guest on a sanctuary expedition to investigate the wreck. The tanker was carrying more than 3 million gallons of thick Santa Maria crude oil when it foundered. This latest expedition revealed no evidence of significant oil leakage from the wreck, but *Montebello* remains a potential environmental threat. For more information on *Montebello* visit channelislands.nos.noaa.gov/shipwreck/dbase/montebello.html.

Finding (and Counting) 'Nemo'

If scuba divers typically didn't have to use hand signals to communicate under water, you might overhear a conversation like this during a Reef Environmental Education Foundation (REEF) fish survey dive:

Diver 1: "Wow! Did you see that?"

Diver 2: "I sure did! I've never seen that fish species before. It's beautiful!"

Diver 1: "Whatever it is, I don't think I've seen it in any field guide."

Diver 2: "It could be a new species!"

Indeed it could.

"Our volunteer surveyors have found a couple of new species—new to science," says REEF Scientific Coordinator Dr. Christy Pattengill-Semmens.

"I have done 600 surveys, and I still find new things," says Christy, herself a diver. "I find little gobies or blennies that I've never seen before all the time. I always wonder what's going to be the next exciting find."

REEF started the Fish Survey Project in 1993 in the Florida Keys to enable divers and snorkelers to collect information useful to researchers and resource managers. Working with scientists from NOAA's National Marine Sanctuary Program (NMSP), NOAA Fisheries and The Nature Conservancy, REEF developed a survey method that would be easy for volunteers to use while yielding quality data.

What they came up with was the "roving diver technique," whereby divers are free to swim around and record everything they can positively identify without have to worry about time or area coverage limits.

Today, thousands of volunteers conduct REEF surveys at hundreds of sites each year throughout the project region, which includes coastal areas of North and Central America, the Galapagos and Hawaii.

"It's a lot like bird watching," says Christy. "Fish watchers love adding new species to their life list, finding rare fish, and witnessing interesting behaviors." By doing these surveys, "you start to see the marine environment in a new light. You have a much better underwater experience."

During or following a dive, survey volunteers estimate the number of fish they saw on a special data sheet provided free by REEF and then send it in to the organization. After performing a quality control check, REEF enters the information into a database and posts summaries on its Web site, www.reef.org. Today, the database contains 62,000 surveys conducted by more than 5,000 volunteers.

Nearly a third of the surveys completed to date were conducted at eight sanctuaries within the National Marine Sanctuary System. In addition to those completed by volunteers during their regular recreational dives within sanctuaries, REEF and



A volunteer records the presence of several species of grunts during a REEF fish survey in the Florida Keys NMS. Photo: Paul Humann. Copyright 2003 REEF.

the sanctuaries coordinate annual survey projects to collect data in specific areas. These projects often yield a large amount of data during a short amount of time for relatively little cost to the NMSP. For example, during a four-day project to the Channel Islands sanctuary earlier this year, volunteers collected 328 surveys and documented nearly 100 species of fish!

"Many marine sanctuaries encompass prime diving and snorkeling areas," says Christy. "REEF surveys offer an exciting, hands-on way for divers and snorkelers to put their skills to work for the benefit of these unique and special places. They also learn more about the living creatures in our national marine sanctuaries."

"In the development of the methods and techniques used for REEF fish surveys, REEF and its founders have exhibited enormous vision by pioneering in the ocean the kind of conservation ethic that terrestrial naturalists have demonstrated for over a century," says Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary Superintendent Billy Causey.

The REEF fish survey data represent a tool that resource managers and scientists can use to better understand marine fish populations. The data have been used by NMSP and others to assess fish populations within national marine sanctuaries, identify areas with especially large varieties of fish and monitor populations of non-native fish species.

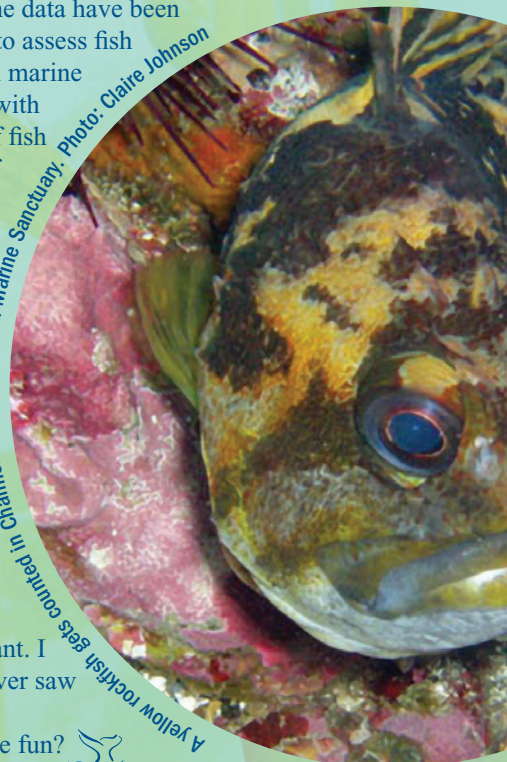
REEF organizes free fish identification seminars and survey dive opportunities, including the sanctuaries-focused Great Annual Fish Count, for divers and snorkelers of all skill levels.

"I've learned a ton from doing [REEF surveys]," says diver Andy Mannich of Slidell, Louisiana. "It's helped me be more observant. I see things in my dives I never saw before."

Who says science can't be fun? 

To learn more about REEF fish surveys and the organization's partnership with the National Marine Sanctuary Program, visit www.reef.org/sanctuaries.

A yellow rockfish gets counted in Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary. Photo: Claire Johnson



Critter Files: Whale Watching

If a 35-ton whale leaps out of the water, does it make a sound? Just ask the hundreds of thousands of people who have seen such spectacular displays of whale behavior in marine sanctuaries around the nation.

In 1999, 370,000 people stepped aboard whale watching vessels in Hawaiian Island Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary alone, generating approximately \$19 to \$27 million for the local economy. Similarly, in 1996 an estimated 860,000 people signed up for whale watching tours in Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary, generating approximately \$440 million for businesses in the surrounding area. While these figures highlight the economic activity generated by our sanctuaries, they also illustrate the recreational opportunities to be enjoyed by all.

Whales have been known to exhibit all kinds of behavior when human spectators are in their midst. "Colt," a humpback whale found at Stellwagen Bank, is known for his playful interaction with whale watching tours. Often, he will dive repeatedly to opposite sides of the vessel, mischievously luring his guest's into a game of hide-and-seek. Colt has also been known to splash his admirers with the quick thrust his fluke, or tail flipper, in a behavior know as "tail slapping." Another common behavior seen by whale watching enthusiast is "spyhopping," a technique whales use to gain better surface vision by propelling their heads upward with their flukes.

Whales may also "jump" out of the water in a behavior known as "breaching." All of these performances can make for an exceptional show, even from a distance.

When enjoying the company of whales, it is important to remember that many mammals were commercially hunted and are now protected under the Endangered Species Act and Marine Mammal Protection Act. It is the responsibility of everyone who comes into contact with these precious resources to act in a manner that assures the safety of both the viewed and the viewer. This is true whether you are on a private or commercially-operated vessel.



Visitors to Gulf of the Farallones NMS are treated to a visit by a humpback whale. Photo: GFNMS

Here are five easy-to-follow guidelines that will make your whale-watching adventure safe and enjoyable:

1. See a Spout, Watch Out!

Spouts are a good indicator that there are one or more whales in the area. Proceed with caution.

2. Head on is Wrong!

Always approach a whale from the back or side, not from the front.

3. Lots of Boats? Then Talk to Folks!

Use your radio to coordinate viewing with other boats.

4. Avoid Troubles, Stay Clear of Bubbles!

The release of bubbles is a feeding strategy among many whales. Bubbles and birds circling above can be good indicators that a whale is about to surface. Stay clear.

5. Don't Get Close, Let Whales Approach!

Sometimes a curious whale will approach a vessel, but a frightened one will not.

Researcher's Notebook

Common name: Humpback whale

Scientific name: Megaptera novaeangliae

Max length: 50 feet (15 meters)

Max weight: 40 tons (36 metric tons)

Max lifespan: May be up to 80 years

Distribution: Widely distributed in all oceans, ranging from tropical wintering grounds near islands and continental coasts to open-ocean temperate and sub-polar summering habitats.

Diet: Use baleen plates in mouth to filter and consume krill, anchovies, cod, sardines, mackerel, capelin and others sorts of schooling fish.

Status: Like other whales, this species has suffered greatly from exploitation by hunters and are currently listed as an endangered species. At current estimates, there are 8,000 in the North Atlantic, 4,000 in the North Pacific, and approximately 3-4,000 in the southern oceans. Of this, scientists estimate that two-thirds of the entire North Pacific humpback whale population migrates to Hawaiian waters to breed, calve and nurse their young.

Notes: Humpbacks create "songs" with themes and may repeat the same song for hours, broken only by pauses for breath. Researchers are unsure why humpback whales sing but believe it may be to attract females or to notify other whales that they are in the area.



NATIONAL MARINE
SANCTUARIES

The National Marine Sanctuary
Program is managed by NOAA's
National Ocean Service

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vision

People value marine
sanctuaries as
treasured places
protected for future
generations.

mission

To serve as the trustee
for the nation's system
of marine protected
areas to conserve,
protect and enhance
their biodiversity,
ecological integrity, and
cultural legacy.

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Sanctuary Voices

Mike Nussman, President & CEO
American Sportfishing Association



Photo: Paige Gill

Having spent the majority of my career working with others to promote stronger marine conservation, it's a privilege to have this chance to speak on behalf of the recreational fishing community to everyone working to protect our coasts and oceans. We applaud the National Marine Sanctuary Program for reaching out to anglers and especially the recent efforts to include representatives of the recreational fishing community on sanctuary advisory councils.

It's clear that a new era for marine conservation is emerging. This evolving movement is charged by forces that are much broader than any one group with a stake in ensuring the health of our oceans. The recreational fishing community—nearly 50 million strong—definitely wants to help lead the path of progress.

In places like the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary, where I recently fished, it's easy to see that fishing is such a central part of America's way of life and livelihood. It's an economic mainstay and a colorful part of our culture in communities across the country. Overall, recreational fishing has a \$116-billion-a-year impact on our nation's economy.

While we may perceive ocean conservation issues from different angles, all our interests clearly converge when it comes to healthy fisheries and habitat. More than anything, I hope to convey that anglers and the sportfishing industry recognize that outdoor recreation is a dividend of our strong investments in conservation.

Yet our progress in pushing for our broader goals is often getting sidetracked because of the debate on no-fishing zones. Given all the issues we're trying to tackle together, it's not a radical idea to consider more special protection for certain marine areas. It should not be surprising, however, that approaches that are vague on criteria, scope and benefit, yet definitive on denying all access, are going to cause concern among such a large and active constituency, especially one that shares the same conservation goal.

In making decisions on all the tools we use to recover marine fisheries and provide for their lasting protection, we need approaches that address the biggest problems, like overharvest, excessive bycatch and habitat destruction. Anglers have repeatedly sacrificed their catch or technique to save fisheries and put themselves at the forefront of habitat conservation. The recreational fishing community has taken a lead role in the recovery of striped bass, redfish, weakfish and flounder, and continues to speak out for their protection.

In the broader conservation arena, the biggest challenge we all face is apathy. That's why the Commerce Department, despite how difficult it is to represent diverse constituencies, would benefit greatly from better engaging America's anglers, who have a strong track record of positively influencing national conservation policy.

Current ocean policy proposals advocate more consideration for the interactions among species and their habitats in making resource management decisions. Yet many of these proposals fall short on another fundamental element of ecosystem management—that people who are directly affected by public policies need to be engaged in the decision-making process for those policies to be effective in the long run. It acknowledges that one of the main reasons we conserve our natural resources is to sustain people's livelihoods and leisure. Doing so does not take away from the more intangible values of conservation. It gives us our best chance to save them as well!



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